

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 NSCE-00 SSO-00 IO-13 ACDA-07 EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5869

INFO CINCPAC

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 8607

NOFORN

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINR, CH

SUBJECT: EARLY TENG RETURN QUESTIONS PEKING TIMETABLES

REFS: A) PEKING 1497; B) PEKING 1472; C) PEKING 1470

1. ALTHOUGH SIGNS HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT TENG HSIAO-PING WOULD SOON RETURN TO HIS POWERFUL ROLE IN CHINESE POLITICS (HONG KONG 8378), THE TIMEING OF HIS RETURN MAY HAVE BEEN ALTERED IN SUCH A WAY TO GIVE HIM EVEN GREATER POWER THAN EARLIER ENVISIONED. THE POSTER OUTSIDE THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES (AFP, KYODO, REUTERS JULY 19) WHICH ACKNOWLEDGED AND WELCOMED TENG'S RETURN TO HIS PREVIOUS POSTS AS VICE PREMIER, VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY AND OF THE MILITARY COMMISSION, AND CHIEF OF THE
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GENERAL STAFF COULD STILL BE A PREMATURE SIGNAL OF THE TIMING OF TENG'S RETURN (REFTELS), BUT THE URGENCY OF RECENT COMMENDATIONS OF TENG AND HIS PROGRAM SUGGEST THAT THE CURRENT POSTER LEAKS DO NOT REPRESENT AN EFFORT TO FORCE THE LEADERSHIP'S HAND.

2. THAT THE REGIME HAS REACHED A CONSENSUS ON TENG'S RETURN WAS

FIRST INDICATED BY THE THREE ARTICLES WHICH APPEARED BETWEEN JUNE 30 AND JULY 16 IN WHICH TENG AND HIS PROGRAM WERE OFFICIALLY BROUGHT BACK OVER "GANG" ATTACKS AND DESCRIBED AS BEING IN CONSONANCE WITH CHAIRMAN MAO'S LINE AND POLICIES (HONG KONG 8181). THE MAO-TENG CONNECTION WAS REINFORCED BY EACH SUCCESSIVE ARTICLE AND ITS CURRENT TRANSMISSION THROUGH THE PROVINCIAL BROADCAST NETWORK -- FIRST APPEARING IN MAO AND HUA'S HUNAN -- INDICATES THAT IT IS PART OF THE CENTRAL PLAN FOR TENG'S RESTORATION.

3. EARLIER EVIDENCE CONCERNING THE TIMETABLE WORKED OUT AT THE MARCH CENTRAL WORK CONFERENCE (REPORTED BY MING PAO AND FEI I-MIN) SUGGESTED THAT TENG WOULD RETURN ONLY AFTER FULL VINDICATION BY THE PROCESS OF PARTY PLENUM, PARTY CONGRESS, AND NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS. IN THAT PROCESS, TENG WOULD BE LEGITIMIZED IN THE SAME MOVES WHICH FORMALIZED CHAIRMAN HUA'S SUCCESSION TO CHAIRMAN MAO, AND EFFECTIVELY PURGED THE "GANG OF FOUR". THE NEW TIMETABLE SUGGESTED BY THE POSTERS IMPLIES THAT TENG'S RETURN TO OFFICIAL POSTS WOULD PRECEDE THE CONGRESS, THOUGH IT STILL COULD BE IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE OTHER DECISIONS ON HUA AND THE FOUR PURGED LEADERS. (THE DECISION COULD EVEN PRECEDE THE PLENUM, SINCE THE CURRENT DECISION COULD ALSO HAVE BEEN THE RESULT OF AN EXPANDED POLITBURO SESSION MUCH THE SAME AS TENG'S ORIGINAL DISMISSAL IN APRIL 1976.) THE FORMAT SUGGESTS A SCENARIO IN WHICH TENG'S RETURN TO FORMER POSTS WOULD BE IN CONFIDENTIAL

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CONJUNCTION WITH THE DECISION TO FORMALIZE AND OPENLY ANNOUNCE THE MARCH WORK CONFERENCE DECISION THAT TENG WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TIEN AN MEN RIOTS AND THAT HIS BEHAVIOR AND RECOGNITION OF HIS ERRORS IDENTIFIED AS CENTRAL DOCUMENT 15 BY MING PAO WAS SUFFICIENT TO EARN HIM RESTORATION TO HIS PREVIOUS POSTS.

TA KUNG PAO PUBLISHER FEI-I-MIN HAS INDICATED THAT SUCH A SCENARIO WOULD BE POSSIBLE (HONG KONG 8459).

4. THE NET RESULT OF SUCH A CHANGE IN PRIORITIES IS A MAJOR STRENGTHENING OF TENG HSIAO-PING'S HAND PRIOR TO THE ELEVENTH PARTY CONGRESS. TENG LEGITIMIZED AS A FULL MEMBER OF THE CURRENT RULING ELITE WILL HAVE CONSIDERABLY MORE INFLUENCE THAN IF HE WERE STILL SITTING IN THE WINGS AWAITING FINAL CLEARANCES. AND, IT WOULD NOT PREVENT HIM FROM MOVING STILL HIGHER THAN THESE POSTS ONCE THE ELEVENTH CONGRESS MEETS.

5. OF MAJOR CONCERN IS THE REASON WHY THE REGIME HAS HAD TO SCRAP ITS ORIGINAL PLANS AND WHY THE REGIME HAS GIVEN TENG SO MUCH EXTRA INFLUENCE. WHILE THIS ARRANGEMENT COULD BE PRESUMED A DIRECT WEAKENING OF CHAIRMAN HUA WHO ANNOUNCED THE EARLIER TIMETABLE AND STUCK TO IT THESE MANY MONTHS, IT

IS NOT NECESSARILY CERTAIN THAT TENG'S ADVANCE WILL BE OUT
OF SYNCHRONIZATION WITH HUA'S CURRENT PLANS. THE PRESSURE
OF COMPETING FORCES WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP OVER TENG AND
HIS PAST RECORD COULD STILL HAVE BEEN A SERIOUS PROBLEM,
BUT IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAT THE REGIME NEEDED TENG'S
HAND TO ASSIST IN THE COMPLETION OF THE PURGE OF FOLLOWERS
OF THE "GANG OF FOUR" AS WELL AS THE HANDLING OF THE
ECONOMIC PROGRAM. THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF INDICATORS IN
PROVINCIAL BROADCASTS THAT THE PARTY RECTIFICATION CAMPAIGN HAS
NOT BEEN GOING WELL AND HINTS THAT BIGGER INDIVIDUALS WERE GRADUALLY
BEING TARGETED COULD HAVE ADDED TO THE PROBLEMS. ECONOMIC RECOVERY
SIGNALS ARE ALSO MIXED AND THE QUESTION OF PLA MODERNIZATION
EXPEDITURES MAY NOT HAVE BEEN FINALIZED. FINALLY, THE
UNUSUAL TREATMENT GIVEN TO YEH CHIEN-YING IN RECENT WEEKS
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COULD MEAN THE OLD MARSHAL IS FADING AND THAT TENG MUST
HELP PRESERVE THE LEADERSHIP BALANCE.
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